

Chief defends protest response from LAPD officers

FROM CITY NEWS SERVICE

LOS ANGELES — Police Chief Jim McDonnell is defending his agency's handling of the recent immigration-enforcement protests, which sparked some allegations of excessive force and indiscriminate use of non-lethal weaponry and tear gas, with the chief saying suggestions the response was undisciplined or lacked oversight are "simply not accurate."

In a lengthy written statement issued June 23, McDonnell said he felt compelled to respond to recent allegations — some raised in a weekend report by the Los Angeles Times — questioning the LAPD's tactics in dealing with protesters in recent weeks.

McDonnell said he takes all accusations of misconduct seriously and all use-of-force cases will be investigated.

"Our officers are held to the highest standards — legally, ethically and operationally," the chief said. "And when we find that an officer has fallen short, we take swift and appropriate action. That is not new. That is our duty."

But McDonnell said accountability "must cut both ways," pointing to the "dangerous, fluid and ultimately violent conditions our officers encountered."

"When demonstrators began throwing objects, setting fires, and refusing to disperse after repeated lawful orders were given, officers were justified in taking swift and measured action to prevent further harm and restore public safety," the chief said.

"In numerous well-documented cases, our officers were



Los Angeles police officers watch immigration protesters at Gloria Molina Grand Park in downtown Los Angeles from a distance. Police Chief Jim McDonnell is defending how his officers have handled the protests amid complaints about excessive force and the use of non-lethal weapons.

Courtesy photo

not met with peaceful protest. They were violently attacked, and 52 LAPD officers sustained injuries that required medical treatment. Commercial-grade fireworks that could kill were launched directly at them.

"Bottles, bricks, and projectiles were hurled at their heads and bodies, in addition to incendiary devices and Molotov cock-

tails," McDonnell added. "A motorcycle was weaponized and deliberately driven into a police skirmish line. These were not isolated events; they were coordinated and dangerous acts by criminal agitators intent on causing harm — not just to officers, but to nearby demonstrators and bystanders."

McDonnell said the use

of foam rounds and chemical agents such as tear gas was not approved indiscriminately, but was instead authorized "in direct response to immediate, credible threats."

He also insisted that dispersal orders were delivered in accordance with legal standards, and all of the department's actions were subject to oversight.

"To suggest our response lacked discipline or oversight is simply not accurate," he said. "We were in contact with city leaders and operated within a unified command structure alongside multiple local and regional agencies, including the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and the California Highway Patrol. Our shared goal throughout was to restore order, preserve life, and uphold constitutional rights."

One protester, Bridgette Covelli, told The Times she took part in the June 14 No Kings Day protest downtown. She said that well before a downtown curfew was set to take effect, LAPD officers began to fire rubber bullets and smoke bombs at protesters, despite no dispersal order being given. She told the paper she was with that a hard-foam projectile broke her forearm.

Shakeer Rahman, a civil rights attorney and community organizer with the Stop LAPD Spying Coalition, told The Times that he saw two colleagues on June 8 who were demanding to know an officer's badge number get shot with a 40mm less-lethal projectile launcher at close range.

"It's an officer who doesn't want to be questioned and knows he can get away with firing these shots," Rahman told the paper.

Another protester, Raphael Mimoun, told The Times he was part of a protest on June 8, and officers eventually moved in quickly on the group.

"I don't know if they made any announcement, any dispersal order, but basically you had like a line of mounted police

coming behind the line of cops that were on foot and then they just started charging, moving forward super fast, pushing people, screaming at people, shooting rubber bullets," he said.

McDonnell insisted that the department is committed to protecting people's right to peacefully protest, but said officers also must respond to people who instigate violence or take advantage of protests to commit crimes.

"Some have questioned our tactics," he said. "Others have cited edited video clips or anecdotal accounts as definitive evidence of misconduct. We must separate fact from speculation and context from narrative."

"To those who protested peacefully: we see you, we respect you, and we will continue to protect your right to speak and assemble. To those who sought to exploit these moments of civic expression for criminal ends: your actions endangered lives, and we will continue to respond lawfully and decisively to prevent further harm."

"To the people of Los Angeles: thank you for your high expectations," McDonnell added. "You deserve accountability, transparency, and fairness, and we are committed to delivering all three, not just in this moment, but every day we put on the badge."

"The LAPD is not perfect. But we are principled. We are evolving. And we are committed — every single day — to maintaining public trust, and to serving this city with courage, compassion, and constitutional integrity."

Judge wants city to provide updated plan for homeless

BY FRED SHUSTER

Contributing Writer

LOS ANGELES (CNS) — A federal judge has determined that the city of Los Angeles failed to meet its obligations under a settlement agreement with the L.A. Alliance for Human Rights and must provide an updated plan detailing how it will create almost 13,000 shelter beds for homeless residents by the end of June 2027, according to court papers obtained June 25.

In an order filed June 24 by U.S. District Judge David Carter, he wrote that the city has shown "a consistent lack of cooperation and responsiveness — an unwillingness to provide documentation unless compelled by court order or media scrutiny."

The judge stopped short of finding that the city breached the agreement on the whole and declined the "last resort" of ap-

pointing a receiver to enforce the city's compliance with the lawsuit settlement, as requested by plaintiffs. But the court did institute a federal monitor to oversee compliance and ask the hard questions on behalf of Angelenos," the judge wrote.

The order comes after a seven-day evidentiary hearing in which the L.A. Alliance, a coalition of business owners and city and county residents, alleged that the city's refusal to provide updated plans, meet its milestones, correct its encampment reduction numbers, and verify its reporting has unnecessarily and unfairly wasted the resources of the parties and the court.

The judge largely agreed, finding that rather than spending taxpayer dollars on uncovering the missing data or straining to provide verification, the city fought with the results and methods of a court-ordered independent audit of its homeless

services.

Karen Richardson, a spokesperson for L.A. City Attorney Hydee Feldstein Soto, said the court made the right decision by rejecting the L.A. Alliance's "radical request to appoint an unelected and unaccountable receiver" to control the city's homelessness programs.

"Over the last three years, the city of Los Angeles has successfully moved thousands of Angelenos off the streets, into housing and services," Richardson said in a statement. "Thousands of new housing units have been built, and homelessness is down in L.A. for the first time in years."

The case started in March 2020 when L.A. Alliance filed a complaint in Los Angeles federal court against the city and Los Angeles County accusing officials of not doing enough to address homelessness.

A judge signed off on a set-

tlement in September 2023 in which the county agreed to supply an additional 3,000 beds for mental and substance abuse treatment by the end of next year and subsidies for 450 new board-and-care beds. The L.A. Alliance settled with the city in 2022, but later filed papers alleging the city was not meeting its obligations.

The independent assessment made public in March was unable to verify the number of homeless shelter beds the city claims to have created.

According to L.A. Alliance, Alvarez & Marsal's yearlong audit revealed Los Angeles' homeless response to be burdened with antiquated systems, obsolete data infrastructure, contracts lacking accountability and leadership either unwilling or unable to correct course.

"At the heart of this evidentiary record lies a persistent problem: the inability to verify

the city's reported data," according to the judge's order, which granted in part and denied in part the L.A. Alliance's motion for settlement agreement compliance.

The agreement requires the city to produce of 12,915 shelter beds by June 2027. There are still more than 3,800 beds to be created, court papers show.

"Plaintiffs in this case ask the court to declare the system irreparably broken," Carter wrote in his 62-page order. "They argue that only the imposition of a receivership can meet this moment."

"But the court is not a policymaker. It cannot be. Its role is narrower, but no less vital: to uphold the promises made to the public, to enforce the agreements signed, and to ensure transparency and accountability in their execution."

Carter ordered quarterly hearings, beginning Nov. 12, and

continuing as needed, to ensure the city's commitments are honored. The city's plan detailing its updated bed plan must be delivered by Oct. 3, the judge said.

"The court wants the city to succeed," he wrote. "Because when the system fails, people die. And when it works — even slowly — lives are saved."

Ultimately, Carter, wrote, the court's decision not to declare a breach "reflects judicial restraint, not confidence. The pattern is clear: documentation is withheld until exposure is imminent, public accountability is resisted until judicially mandated, and the truth of reported progress remains clouded by evasive record-keeping."

Carter determined that such failures "have undermined public trust and judicial trust alike."

Fred Shuster is a reporter for City News Service.

Metro Digest

Handcuffed woman steals police vehicle, escapes in Hollywood Hills

but not the suspect, according to Fox11.

HOLLYWOOD — A suspect is being sought after she allegedly stole a police cruiser while handcuffed June 23, led officers on a brief chase, then abandoned the vehicle and eluded capture.

Officers conducting an in-

They found an employee in front of the dispensary, who told them a man tried to rob the business and he shot the alleged robber, the sheriff's department said.

Police found the other man inside the dispensary suffering from gunshot wounds. He was pronounced dead at the scene.

Segundo and Norwalk, a spokesperson said.

The project calls for converting the existing carpool lane into an Express Lane and adding a second Express Lane in each direction.

"Express Lanes, already in use on the San Bernardino (10)

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Mexican Hollywood Half a Century Gone, Bonds Remain Strong

By Jaime Ruiz, Contributor

Editor's Note: On June 7, the City of Los Angeles commemorated the memory of Mexican Hollywood at the Cruise Ship Terminal, the historic site of the beloved neighborhood that thrived from the 1920s to the 1950s. The event honored the rich cultural legacy of the Mexican-American community in the Los Angeles Harbor Area. *Random Lengths News* is reprinting an updated version of reporter Jaime Ruiz's 2005 story.

Sitting where the Los Angeles Cruise Center now stands, Mexican Hollywood still occupies a special place in the hearts and memories of the people of San Pedro, particularly the people who used to call this neighborhood home.

Described by local historians as a quaint little village, north of Second Street between Harbor Boulevard and the waterfront, the story of how Mexican Hollywood arrived at its name are various, numerous, and anything but quaint. One story has it that in the 1920s, the name emerged due to its obvious contradiction — namely that Mexicans made up the majority of residents while the neighborhood was anything but Hollywood in terms of wealth or fame.

Delfina Aguilar Rivera lived on the other side of Pacific Avenue had friends who lived in Mexican Hollywood. Rivera recalls a story that seems to capture the spirit and pride of the residents.

"Years ago, when the canneries were down there, they were filming a lot of the old movies," Rivera began. "When they used

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On June 7, 250 celebrants showed up for the unveiling of the Mexican Hollywood Square sign, honoring the short-lived San Pedro neighborhood. Mexican Culture Society president, Magdalene de Alba with her husband, Javier de Alba, beneath the unveiled Mexican Hollywood Square sign. Photo by Chris Villanueva

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Trump's War on Immigrants and the Rule of Law Trump Makes Police-State Fantasy Explicit, "No Kings" Demonstrations Explode, Courts Remain Key Battleground

By Paul Rosenberg, Senior Editor

Like authoritarian leaders around the world, Donald Trump thrives on creating crises he then pretends he alone can resolve.

It began on Friday, June 6, with ICE workplace raids, including day laborers at the Westlake Home Depot. Why? Because ICE can't find enough criminals to meet Trump's deportation targets. There aren't nearly enough of them. But in three days time, Trump had managed to spin the resulting community outrage into justification for turning federal troops loose to attack his perceived enemies.

"We're going to have troops everywhere," Trump said on Sunday night. "We're not going to let this happen to our country. We're not going to let our country be torn apart."

But it's Trump himself who's tearing the country

apart. LA was peaceful before the ICE raids. And even afterwards, protests were overwhelmingly peaceful. Then he called up the National Guard without Gov. Gavin Newsom's request or consent — something that hasn't been done since the Civil Rights Movement, when it was done to protect civil rights protesters, against the wishes of a terror-supporting segregationist governor. What Trump's doing now is the exact opposite. And his border czar, Tom Homan, even threatened to arrest Gov. Newsom and LA Mayor Karen Bass if they got in his way.

Trump doubled down, saying it would be a "great thing" if Homan arrested Newsom, adding that Newsom's "primary crime is running for governor because he's done such a bad job."

But if these actions are meant to intimidate the opposition, they're clearly failing. The number of "No Kings"

demonstrations planned for next weekend has jumped by more than 100 in just a few days, Indivisible co-founder Ezra Levin told Rachel Maddow. More than 1,800 are currently planned. There are dozens in the LA region, including Torrance, Long Beach, Catalina Island, and nine Orange County locations from Dana Point to Seal Beach. While previous mass protests organized by 50501, Indivisible and their partners have skewed older and whiter, Trump's crackdown in LA may help broaden the coalition of people who show up.

Itching For Violence

Trump has long wanted to use federal troops to impose his will. "Can't you just shoot them, just

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[Immigrants, from p. 8]

War on Immigrants and the Rule of Law

Trump has even turned against the conservative Federalist Society for its "bad advice" on judicial nominations, after one such judge joined a unanimous ruling that his worldwide tariffs were illegal. He called Leonard Leo, who was chiefly responsible for the picks, a "sleazebag" and a "bad person who, in his own way, probably hates America." So now, even conservative judges aren't good enough for him.

Immigration Lawlessness

Immigration has been a particular focus of Trump's lawlessness. Deportations have taken place despite judicial orders. Even a Supreme Court decision — requiring the Trump administration to facilitate the return of Kilmer Abrego Garcia after he was wrongly deported — was ignored for more than 6 weeks. After it was complied with, Trump lawyers brought new, seemingly trumped-up charges against Garcia. They were based on a year-old incident regarded as harmless at the time, and the case led a high-ranking federal prosecutor to resign, fearing that it was brought for political reasons.

Not only have ICE and other immigration officials acted illegally, but they've also harassed and intimidated elected officials and judges. Newark Mayor Ras Baraka is suing temporary U.S. Attorney General Alina Habba (formerly Trump's personal attorney) for false arrest over a May 9 incident at an ICE facility in his city. After false trespassing charges against him were dismissed, charges were filed against Rep. LaMonica McIver, who was present at the time, claiming she had assaulted officers, a claim unsupported by video of the event.

In Wisconsin, FBI agents arrested a respected state district court judge, Hannah Dugan, based on allegations that she prevented the arrest of a man by immigration authorities during a federal law enforcement operation at her courthouse. In reality, Dugan merely directed him to exit by a different door, which led to the same public area where immigration agents were waiting, and they subsequently did arrest him. So no harm was done, except to the agents' egos. A bipartisan group of more than 130 retired judges subsequently filed a brief urging the court to drop charges, saying her arrest undermines "centuries of precedent on judicial immunity." But that could well be the whole point — to further erode judicial legitimacy.

The Threat of Dictatorial Takeover

All these are symptoms of a deeper threat — the threat of a dictatorial takeover of the courts, as Bonica noted in a May 28 substack, "When Leaders Attack Judges as 'Enemies': The Global Authoritarian Playbook—and How to Stop It." Citing examples on three continents, he wrote, "From Erdogan to Trump, strongmen follow the same script—and mass mobilization offers a path to resist." And he warned *Random Lengths* that "we're in a narrow window where judicial resis-



On June 6, demonstrators in downtown Los Angeles spoke out in solidarity with immigrants, their families and the community following ICE raids throughout Los Angeles County. File photo

tance remains meaningful" because the Supreme Court has also been eroding constitutional limits and human rights protections, and will likely overturn many lower court rulings.

The pattern Bonica described is frustratingly predictable:

A court rules against the leader

The leader attacks judges personally, calling them biased, corrupt or "enemies"

They work to delegitimize the entire judicial system

This creates permission for supporters to threaten and intimidate judges

If there is no or insufficient mass resistance, they capture the courts

If there's sustained, broad resistance, they're forced to pause or retreat

Bonica cited examples such as Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who bluntly told the country's constitutional court, "I don't obey or respect the decision" in a 2016 case, Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, who called Chief Justice Maria Lourdes Sereno an "enemy," and Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro, who openly threatened violence against judges when he faced a corruption investigation.

As for how to stop the destruction of independent courts, "mass protests are effective," Bonica argued, "but intensity and timing are important," and he offered the contrasting examples of Israel and Poland as illustrations. Summarizing the differences, he wrote, "In Israel, the mobilization was immediate, massive, economically disruptive, and crucially, it united people across political, economic and social lines. In Poland, despite

heroic efforts by judges and citizens, the protests came too late and never achieved the breadth or economic impact needed to stop the takeover."

So what are the prospects for America? Trump's rhetoric is dangerous "because the escalation is already visible," he warned. And our situation is particularly precarious, he told *Random Lengths*.

"One troubling aspect of this is that the federal courts are under attack from outside by political actors while being undermined from within by a Supreme Court that increasingly abandons its role as constitutional guardian," Bonica said. "When lower courts try to enforce constitutional limits and protect human rights, they face the likelihood that the Supreme Court will reverse them in ways that further erode these principles — as we saw with the immunity decision giving presidents a 'get out of jail free' card."

As a result, "This means we're in a narrow window where judicial resistance remains meaningful. Lower court judges still issue rulings defending democracy, but the gap between their decisions and Supreme Court review may represent our last period of effective judicial protection," he warned.

As that window closes, "This internal conflict profoundly complicates public mobilization," he said. "When the highest court undermines both legal principles and its own legitimacy, it's harder to rally support for 'defending the courts.' The Trump admin and allies will be able to point to the Supreme Court and say that the courts are on their side, not the protestors. And from what we've seen so far, they will probably be right."

The attacks on the judiciary are particularly troubling. "It's long been apparent that ICE

would become the secret police if the GOP's authoritarian ambitions progressed," Bonica said. "That they are showing up in courtrooms in a very public and intentional challenge to judicial authority is an ominous sign. That the Supreme Court has done nothing to stop them is even more concerning."

As we go to press, things are very much in flux. Trump's chest-pounding has seemingly distracted attention from a myriad of problems he faces — his failed tariff strategy, a slowing economy, with higher prices, his feud with Musk, and his highly unpopular billionaire tax-cut bill that would simultaneously decimate Medicare, Medicaid, SNAP and much more, while ballooning the deficit and exploding immigration enforcement spending from \$34 billion to \$168 billion. There are so many things Trump doesn't want people paying attention to. So he seems to think that acting tough on immigration is a no-lose strategy.

A big military presence may look tough to some, but for what? Arresting garment workers and chasing after day laborers doesn't look all that tough. And that's really all that Trump has at this point. On May 30, a story in the conservative *Washington Examiner*, "Stephen Miller eviscerated ICE officials in private meeting for low deportation numbers," reported that Trump's top immigration advisor demanded a focus on numbers rounded up. "What do you mean you're going after criminals?" one official quoted him saying. "Stephen Miller wants everybody arrested. 'Why aren't you at Home Depot? Why aren't you at 7-Eleven?'" another said.

An ICE spokesman disputed the account, but what unfolded in Los Angeles after that speaks for itself. And it's no accident.

Contrary to all Trump's rhetoric, undocumented immigrants are far less inclined to commit crimes. The most rigorous study of the subject, based on Texas arrest records between 2012 and 2018, found that "undocumented immigrants are arrested at less than half the rate of native-born U.S. citizens for violent and drug crimes and a quarter the rate of native-born citizens for property crimes." A document based on the study was removed from the Department of Justice website 10 days after Trump took office.

Trump may be able to hide the documentation of the truth. But the truth itself can't be hidden forever. Today's immigrants are basically no different from yesterday's: the vast majority are hardworking seekers of a better life for themselves and their children. A small fraction are criminals, and bigots will try to tar all immigrants with their brush. But undocumented immigrants are far more likely to be victims of crime than to be perpetrators. More than anyone, they need a fair and honest legal system to protect them. They need America's rule of law to actually deliver its promise. They don't want to change America into something wildly unrecognizable and distorted. That's what Donald Trump wants. He is the threat to America.

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